

THE BIG WEIGHT-LIFTING FEAT

I was a packer in a factory east of
Alameda street
and I was living with a bad-assed
woman.

she fucked everybody and anybody
even me.
and I didn't have the sense to get
out.

anyhow, I worked all day and we
drank all night
and I arrived every morning
at Sunbeam Lighting Co. and
I always told them the
same thing:

"don't anybody fuck with me.
I'm not in the mood for it."

this one morning
there was a triangle of steel
with a little loop on top of it.
I didn't know what it was.
it didn't matter.
all the killers and bullies and
musclemen were trying to lift it.
it wouldn't move.

"hey, Hank, baby!" a worker hollered
at me, "try it!"

"all right," I said.

I came around my bench and walked up
to the steel, stuck my finger into the
loop and yanked. nothing. it must have
weighed at least 300 pounds.

I walked back to my bench.

"whatsa matter, Hank baby?"

"been beatin' your meat, Hank baby?"

"your little bib gonna fit this mornin',
Hank baby?"

"ah shit ...," I said, "for CHRIST'S SAKE!"

I came around my bench and swept down on the
steel, grabbed it, lifted it up a good foot and
half, put it down and went back to my bench
and continued packing a light fixture into a
box.

"jesus! did you see that, man?"

"I saw it! he did it!"

"let me lift that son of a bitch!"

he couldn't do it. they all came and tried again. the steel weight wouldn't move.

they went back to their various jobs. at about 11:30 a.m. a truck backed in with a crane in the back of it. the crane reached down, clamped the steel and lifted it, with much grinding, into the truck.

for about a week after that blacks and Mexicans who had never spoken to me tried to make friends. I was looked upon with much respect.

then not long after that everybody seemed to forget about it and

I began to get verbally sliced again
challenged again
mocked again
it was the same old bullshit.

they knew what I knew:
that I'd never lift anything
like that again.

LEGS, HIPS AND BEHIND

we liked the priest because we saw him buy an icecream cone once
we were 9 years old and when I went into my friend's house his mother was always drinking with his father
they left the screen door open and listened to music on the radio
his mother always had her dress pulled high and her legs excited me
made me nervous and afraid but excited somehow
those black high heels and those nylons -- even though she had buck teeth which stuck out